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Letter dated 12 August 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to refer to the letter to you dated 2 August 1999 (A/53/1031-S/1999/839) from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon. In recent months, an increasing number of roadside bombs have been placed along the main axes of movement in the central sectors of the security zone in south Lebanon. Most recently, on 22 July 1999, such a bomb was placed and directed against a bus carrying Israeli soldiers near Moshav Shtula, inside northern Israel, along the security fence that follows the international border.

After this incident, Israel Defense Forces units in the security zone stopped and questioned a number of residents of the nearby Lebanese villages of Ayta and Bint Jubayl. This led to the discovery of large stores of weaponry, including unprecedented quantities of roadside bombs for use by the terrorist organization Hizbullah. It must be stressed that such vast quantities of munitions held in these villages had been used repeatedly against Israeli soldiers as well as against local civilians.

The use by the Hizbullah of Lebanese villages and population centres as launching points and staging areas for terror operations is yet a further violation of the April 1996 understandings reached by former United States Secretary of State Warren Christopher. The support and encouragement given by the Government of Lebanon, as voiced in the letter of the Permanent Representative of Lebanon serves only to add to the above-mentioned violation.

In this context, the allegation made by the Permanent Representative of Lebanon in his letter, that Israel has been holding the people of Ayta "under siege" is baseless. Movement by residents of the village is unrestricted both within the security zone and outside. The claim by the Permanent Representative regarding restrictions on movement by people with severe illnesses is similarly

without foundation. Food supplies and medicines, as well as other goods, are regularly supplied to Ayta, without interruption.

Clearly, Israel has no interest in maintaining its security zone, or in having to search for weapons in such places as Ayta or Bint Jubayl. Israel would, by far, prefer the prevention and avoidance of acts of terror on and from Lebanese territory, through the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which not only calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, but also requires the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority of the Lebanese Government in the area.

Lebanon's refusal to accept Israel's offer to implement the resolution regrettably and often tragically perpetuates the volatile situation in southern Lebanon. The Government of Lebanon is solely responsible for this situation.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 155, entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dore GOLD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative